

Northfield Open Space Committee

Minutes, Sep 16, 2014

Town Hall – Planning Board Room

Items in italics require action prior to next meeting.

Present: Bob Hall, Joanne McGee, Sue Ross, Jerry Wagener, Chair.

Absent: Mike Barry, Julia Blyth, Kate Rossiter (LOA), Jennifer Tufts, Sue Handren, Joe Stacy.

Guests: Jamie Pottern, Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust
Bradley Kennedy, Americorps, Regional Conservationist

The meeting opened at 7:40 p.m.

1. The **minutes** of July 15, 2014, were approved. Bob/Joanne. The minutes of Aug 12, 2014 were also approved. Sue/Bob.

2. **Member comments:**

Sue – Joe Graveline, a Northfield resident who is interested in Native American issues and artifacts, is part of a group planning a National Historic Battlefield Park based in Turner’s Falls and including the surrounding towns of Montague, Gill, and Northfield. The park will commemorate the May 1676 massacre, in the King Philip’s War, by English troops of Native American women and children camped at Turner’s Falls. The planning group, financed by a two-year \$60,000 grant, meets monthly on the first Tuesday at the Turner’s Falls Town Hall. The next meeting is Oct. 7 (10 am to noon).

Jerry – 1) There will be a special town meeting in November which will include Community Preservation votes. 2) Re: Schell Bridge - There will be an important public meeting Oct 30 (6:30 pm) at the elementary school for public input and planning purposes. Attendees will include Sen. Stan Rosenberg, Rep. Paul Mark, DCR, Mass Highway, FRCOG, Selectboard and Friends of Schell Bridge. It is extremely important that the residents attend. 3) Jerry distributed by email letters appointing Kate and Julia as OSC representatives to the Community Park subcommittee of the Master Plan Implementation Committee. 4) NMH is interested in the town making an offer to purchase the land near Pauchaug Boat Ramp excluding the landfill and a house lot. Jerry drafted an offer letter (\$10,000); the Selectboard will consider it soon. This land is one possibility for a community park.

3. **Ames property conservation restriction update:**

Jamie distributed maps and described the process to place a conservation restriction on the 145 acre parcel owned by Nancy and Bill Ames on Route 63. The Ames would continue to own the land, but will be selling the development rights. The focal point for public access will be a handicapped-accessible path to a beaver pond and include a viewing platform and picnic tables. Jamie presented the updated proposed budget with a list of possible grants including a request for \$55,000 from Community Preservation funds. Since Mount Grace’s policy is to refrain from financial liability, Jamie hopes that Northfield residents would be able to assist with fundraising and/or spot additional sources of funds to fill shortfalls. Because residents are already contributing to the

Community Preservation funds, some of which are dedicated for open space, they may balk at additional fundraising.

Sue remarked that the Ames property at the base of Beers Mountain is an extremely historic significant part of Northfield. English explorers sent by the governor to find new land crossed the mountains in the vicinity of Crag and beheld the wonders of the river. *Tales of Papa's Mountain*, a children's book with fictionalized history, was written by Claire Hanavan, former owner of this property. There is an historic site called Hanavan granaries on the land.

Jamie has also designed a new Historic Marker Bike Path which travels down Rt. 63, turns up South Mountain Road and returns to the main highway via Lyman Hill Road. She envisions historical signs to supplement the existing several historical markers. Jamie is planning a site visit on Sept. 24 or 25th to the beaver pond and potential trail.

The committee brainstormed potential links to assist Jamie. *Sue will research grants for historic sites and will notify Joel Fowler, chair of the Historical Commission, and Joe Graveline about the site visit.* Jerry suggested that Jamie contact the Kiwanis and the Northfield Area Tourism and Business Association (NATABA). Joanne suggested replacing the existing name of the project, Beers Mountain Recreation Area, with a title that reflects the historical aspect.

4. TPL Option on NMH land:

Chris LaPointe from Trust for Public Land said in an email that Department of Conservation and Recreation had sent the required notices to Northfield and Warwick about the impending land purchase. TPL is talking with Weston & Sampson, water engineers, about discussions with private water companies and is planning a meeting with Rustic Ridge residents and East Northfield residents about the option of forming a water district.

5. Paddling access to the Ct. River:

Joanne spent a day on the river with TRC consultants, hired by First Light for relicensing purposes, to survey potential spots for paddling access and additional camping spots. The highlight was the opportunity to explain in detail the environmental degradation at Pauchaug Boat Ramp, the need for alternative kayak access, the challenges of creating riverfront paths because of First Light restrictions, and the future parks at the Schell Bridge. Among the spots surveyed by the team was the remediation area at the confluence of Mill Brook and the Ct. River, Bennett Meadow, and several other spots. Joanne also emailed Andrea Donlon, Ct. River Watershed Council, about our difficulties with the restrictions.

6. The meeting was **adjourned** at 9:20 pm. The next meeting is Oct. 21, 2014.

Respectfully submitted,

Joanne McGee, Secretary